



# TALK OF THE TOWN

Town of Hillsborough Newsletter: September 2021

## Meadow Instead of Mowed Lawn? You Can Do This in Hillsborough!

If you want to mow less and provide food for pollinators and shelter for a variety of wildlife next summer, consider preparing this fall for converting some lawn to a managed natural landscape.

Several Hillsborough residents have reduced grass to make room for native plants and are enjoying the benefits of less mowing, more beauty and contributing to a healthier environment. You can start suppressing the lawn by covering it with cardboard or black plastic this fall.

The Town of Hillsborough allows managed natural landscapes — including the creation of meadows mowed once a year — in Chapter 11 of its code of ordinances.

“A managed natural landscape area doesn’t have to be big,” Public Space Manager Stephanie Trueblood said. “Every bit of increased pollinator habitat helps. You can start small and build your managed natural landscape over time.”



Denise Dickinson covered most of her back yard last summer. In fall and spring, she scattered native North Carolina wildflower seeds, and this summer she was delighted by the pollinators who visited the black-eyed susans, yarrow and gaillardia.

“I love that I can skip the regular mowing and also know that I’m doing something good

for the environment,” Dickinson said.

Holly Reid and Rich Shaw mow a field near their house once each March. With the reduced mowing, native swamp milkweed, hemp dogbane and wingstem overtook the grass.

This year they expanded their unmowed area by suppressing lawn over the winter and planting native plants from plugs and seeds in spring. They followed the North Carolina Botanical Garden’s pollinator garden toolkit and chose drought-tolerant, deer-resistant plants. About 90% of the plugs survived the first summer. Reid noticed many more monarchs.

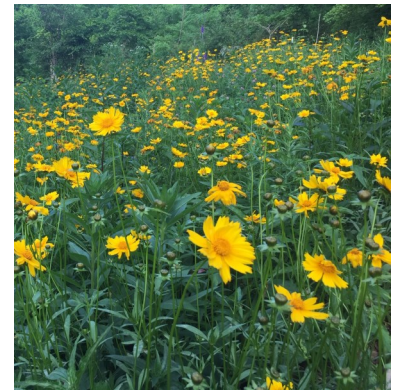


“It’s fun to see all kinds of other insects too,” added Shaw, pointing out wasps and moths attracted to particular plants. “We enjoy the discoveries like learning who else is utilizing these plants for food.”



Just outside town limits, Pascale and Volker Mittendorf have removed diseased and leaning trees and the invasive English ivy and vinca entwined in them to make room for a native prairie landscape. They germinated seeds to transplant, bought plants and spread seeds to add about 50 plant species to their property. Pascale Mittendorf enjoys the vibrant colors the new plants provide, with yellow coreopsis in spring, purple coneflowers and asters in summer and scarlet sage in the fall dappled with other colorful blooms.

Mittendorf encourages others to get started and not to worry about potential failures. “I made plenty of mistakes in the beginning,” she said. “But there is nothing more sterile than a lawn.”



### More information

The North Carolina Pollinator Toolkit is available on the Botanical Garden’s website at [ncbg.unc.edu](http://ncbg.unc.edu). This document offers expert advice on preparing for, planting and maintaining a native pollinator habitat.

If you have questions about the town’s managed natural landscape ordinance, contact Public Space Manager Stephanie Trueblood at [stephanie.trueblood@hillsboroughnc.gov](mailto:stephanie.trueblood@hillsboroughnc.gov) or 919-296-9481.

## New Water Treatment Plant Superintendent: Nathan Cates



Nathan Cates officially became the Water Treatment Plant superintendent in April, having served as the interim superintendent since January in anticipation of former Superintendent Howard Hobson's retirement. Before that, Cates was the town's lead utilities inspector.

"Since 1972, there has been only a handful of water treatment plant superintendents," Utilities Director Marie Strandwitz said. "Nathan will be one of those names in the town's history book as

someone overtly dedicated to providing the best water, taking care of our assets most efficiently, safely, and economically, and promoting continued career growth at the plant."

Cates began working for the town as a utility maintenance technician in 2002. Drawn by the steady paycheck and opportunities for advancement, he worked on a line crew taking care of utility maintenance and emergencies, such as repairing water main breaks and unclogging sewers. He appreciated being mentored by former Utility System Supervisor Adron Thompson.

Cates gained additional certifications and skills and became the town's utility inspector in 2010. He then cross-trained at the Water Treatment Plant and earned a license to run the plant.

He says he learned a lot about both the routine work and how to handle the surprises that arise from past plant superintendents Russell Bateman and Hobson.

"I appreciate all they taught me to get me to where I am today," Cates said.

Cates added that the current Water Treatment Plant staff are great to work with too.

Water-related emergencies such as water line breaks can be reported to the Water Treatment Plant day or night at 919-732-3621.

## Donated Sculpture Installed at Town Park

"A Gathering of Women" was installed in Turnip Patch Park in August. The concrete and mosaic ceramic tile sculpture was created in the 1990s by artists

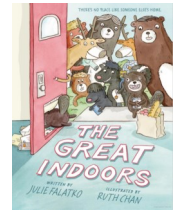


Virginia Bullman and LaNelle Davis. Figures Pearl, Hattie and Emma are composites of women the artists knew.

The installment was donated to the Town of Hillsborough in memory of Mary Jane Burns by Dr. W. Woodrow Burns Jr. of Chapel Hill.

## Updates

**StoryWalk** — Check out the temporary StoryWalk exhibit on the loop trail in Gold Park this month. Girl Scout Troop #3890 is displaying laminated pages of "The Great Indoors" by Julie Falatko until Sept. 30.



**Feedback needed on transportation plan** — The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization is



seeking feedback by Sept. 15 on highway, transit, rail, bicycle and other transportation improvements that should be included in its 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. To read the plan and comment, visit [www.dchcmpo.org/what-we-do/programs-plans/transportation-plans/2050-metropolitan-transportation-plan](http://www.dchcmpo.org/what-we-do/programs-plans/transportation-plans/2050-metropolitan-transportation-plan).

**New Reports** — The town's latest annual water and wastewater quality reports are available on the town's [Water Treatment Plant](#) and the [Wastewater Treatment Plant](#) pages. The town's 2021 annual stormwater reports are available now on the town's [Stormwater and Environmental Regulation](#) page.

**Sign up for OC Alerts** — The town issues emergency notifications through [OC Alerts](#), Orange County's mass notification system. Sign up today!



**Thank you** — The town received more than 600 responses to our Community Visioning Survey. For survey results, visit [www.hillsboroughnc.gov/sustainability](http://www.hillsboroughnc.gov/sustainability).

